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ABSTRACT

The basic learning theory underlying this study is that not all language needs can be accounted for by a prediction of the possible language situations in which a person will engage. This paper proposes a way of resolving the problems of determining what is grammatically necessary as a sound basis of all language use and what constitutes a speaker's communicative competence. The framework is organized in notional categories. By considering first what the content of utterances is likely to be, it is possible to decide which forms of language will be most valuable. If it is assumed that most learners will need to express a similar range of content, it becomes possible to set up comparable syllabuses for different languages. The notional information is then supplemented by information concerning obligatory grammatical categories not predictable from the notional approach. A number of detailed examples are given of the varied ways in which some of the functional categories are expressed in English. The appendix contains a section which exemplifies the categories of communicative function. (Author/RL)

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# *Modern Languages*

## *The linguistic and situational content of the common core in a unit credit system*

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# An investigation into the linguistic and situational content of the common core in a unit/credit system

by

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## PART 1. THE AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This study is one of a number of investigations undertaken to prepare the ground for the introduction of a language learning system for adults. The language material to be learned will be organised into units and a learner will be awarded a specified number of credits on completion of each unit. The contents of the system are to be defined with reference to the nature of the learners and their linguistic needs. Each learner will be free to follow units which are relevant to the particular purposes to which he intends to put the language. The general aim, therefore, is to identify the units in behavioural terms. In this way the learner can be strongly motivated by the knowledge that what he is learning is relevant to his needs and that his learning will be made the more efficient by the exclusion of all that is irrelevant.

In order to achieve this it is necessary to abandon the conventional grammatical syllabus which attempts to teach the entire grammatical system without regard to its application to specific language needs and to the fact that not all parts of the system are equally important to all learners. This syllabus is to be replaced by one in which the content of a learning unit is determined by the type of learner who will take it and the language situations in which he can be expected to engage. Such a syllabus has been called a situational syllabus. In it, the analysis of the learner's behaviour has been the first step and the linguistic definition has followed from this.

For reasons which were discussed and agreed at the Rüschlikon Symposium (document CCC/EES (71) 135, Conclusion p. 38), it is now feasible to ignore general grammatical considerations in planning such a system. It was generally agreed that situation-based units can be more practicably based on an initial general linguistic competence, albeit of a somewhat elementary type, that there is a common-core of language which most situational varieties draw upon and that there are uses of language, particularly by more advanced learners, which are not restricted to particular situations and which would not be predicted from a situational analysis. The conclusion was reached that the first stage of the unit/credit system would have to provide a grammatical minimum for the situational

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units. This minimum has come to be called the threshold level (T-level). It was also concluded that the succeeding situational units would be related to the core.

The aim of this study is to attempt to define the nature of the common grammatical core and to illustrate it with special reference to English. Special attention is to be paid to the linguistic realisations of non-situational communication functions. It is not intended that the different levels of the common-core should be clearly defined, although indications are given of possible linguistic prerequisites for the lowest level. Consideration is to be given to the feasibility of presenting the linguistic core through situations in the learning units.

## PART 2. THE APPROACH ADOPTED

There are a number of ways in which one might wish or attempt to determine the content of the common core. A statistical study of a wide range of language uses would reveal what is common to most of them. However, such statistics are not available, and neither are the descriptions of language varieties on which they could be based. Such an approach, therefore, holds no hope of concrete results. As an alternative, one might look at courses designed to teach the target language and see what, by common consent, was taken to be the content of any long-term language course. The product would be the familiar grammatical syllabus according to which language is normally taught. However we would not be breaking any new ground if we were merely to synthesise the content of existing language courses. It should also be borne in mind that the original motivation for this study was the desire to replace the traditional structural organisation of language teaching by something more meaningful to the learner. The same objections could be made to a study based on a personal view of the priorities in the learning of grammatical structure.

In this paper an alternative to situational and grammatical approaches to the definition of content is proposed and outlined. It involves asking the question: "What are the notions that the European learner will expect to be able to express through the target language?" It therefore represents a notional or semantic approach to the construction of syllabuses. It should be possible to establish what kind of thing a speaker needs to say, what situational constraints will be operating and, from these, what linguistic forms are suitable for the encoding of his

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message. Since the threshold level is, by definition, a limited competence, its content will be determined by the minimal set of notions that will permit communication with native speakers in a typically European environment. The advanced learner, on the other hand, will expect to be able to express altogether more complex ideas and to make finer differentiations of meaning. The notional framework proposed will allow for definition of the needs of both the elementary and the advanced learner. One advantage of this approach is that it will facilitate comparability of syllabuses for different languages. The proposed categories (after refinement in the light of criticism and advances in linguistic research) should be applicable to most European languages. There remains room for discussion of what notions the elementary learner will find it most useful to express.

## PART 3. THE NOTIONAL CATEGORIES

Some major notional categories are outlined below. These categories cannot, of course, handle all the content of utterances, since this would require a system capable of representing all the semantic information to be found in a grammar, a dictionary and a thesaurus of the language. The categories are those supposed to be of general importance, or potentially so, to the learner. They are categories which are appropriate to the means of and need for communication in a European context. Although some of the relations and functions are presumably universally features of human interaction, no such claim is made for the set of categories as a whole. It is assumed, however, that a wider interpretation can be given to the labels used than their value in English. In this section the categories are listed on the left-hand side with discussion and exemplification where these seem necessary. On the right-hand side suggestion is made of the linguistic forms relating to the category which seem desirable at the threshold level. This part is only indicative of what the T-level syllabus might contain and needs to be much more detailed before it can be made into a syllabus proper. If certain notions are unimportant at the T-level, there will be no entry on the right-hand side.

### A. SEMANTICO-GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

These are notional categories which, in European languages at least, interact significantly with grammatical categories. This is why they contribute to the definition of the grammatical content of learning. It is evident that most of them are also realised lexically. However, this paper is not concerned with the lexical content of learning, and, in any case, the approach adopted does not seem particularly suitable for the definition of the lexical content of learning.

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I. Time

1. Point of time

The expression of points of time is clearly important in European cultures and mastery of some of the means of expressing them is needed even at the most elementary level. At the lowest level it seems possible to exclude the embedding of sentences in time expressions. What will remain to be taught are the more conventional expressions.

e.g. ..... on Monday .....
but not ..... on the day before he leaves .....

2. Duration

Specific periods of time may be referred to by use of various prepositions followed by Noun Phrases and by conjunctions preceding clauses. It is not easy to judge just what kinds of expressions are likely to be most useful to the learner at an elementary level. The notion of duration as such may be expressed by the verbal category of Aspect (as in English - see F. R. Palmer) where it stands in contrast to non-durative. The English verbal system is such that the choice between the two terms in the opposition cannot be avoided. The inclusion of only one term at the T-level can be made only if one is prepared to accept grammatically incorrect utterances from the learner.

3. Time relations

(a) It is common for events to be related to the moment of speech and to one another by use of the verbal system. Although the most obvious logical division of time might be into past,

1. it's / at { one o'clock / a quarter to three / twenty-five past / eight etc.

2. Days, months, dates

3. Yesterday, today, tomorrow

4. last / etc. { week / month etc.

this / yesterday { morning / evening etc.

1. for + NP (durational nouns)
since + NP (point of time)

2. Expressions as in 1.4 above which may refer to periods as well as points of time.

3. Durative aspect applied only to present time

i.e. is taking
not was taking
has been taking
may have been taking
etc.

./.

present and future, these concepts are scarcely ever realised uniquely by verb forms (tenses). In addition, far more subtle time distinctions are common.

e.g. Before past, after past ..... etc.

In deciding what is most urgently required by the T-level learner, we have to ask what is the minimal system that a speaker can meaningfully operate. It seems that he needs to be able to differentiate at least past, present and future time. In the case of English this leaves further problems since no verbal form is the only or the simple realisation of these notions. Past events may be encoded in the Past Tense or in the Present Perfect and the choice is made according to the speaker's emphasis and view of events. If the T-level is to be quite advanced, there is a case for arguing that both should be learned. If it is to be restricted to the most elementary, the choice should go to the Past Tense since its meaning is the more easily acquired and in some dialects (e.g. American) the distinction between it and the Present Perfect is becoming neutralised.

With regard to future time, there is no Future Tense in English. The choice therefore lies between various forms the use of each of which is stylistically or grammatically restricted. Given the probably colloquial nature of much anticipated language use at this level, the "going to + V" form seems the most appropriate.

(b) Time relations are not uniquely expressed through verbs. Notions such as "anterior to", "posterior to" and "simultaneous with" may be conveyed adverbially or by various combinations of grammatical forms. The use of expressions from I.1 (above) together with a past, present or future verb form indicates simultaneity. Use of "before" or "after", as prepositions, conjunctions or adverbs, will express the other notions.

1. Present Tense

   Past Tense

   going to + V

   (Present Perfect)

   (NB Note that if the Present Perfect is not learned, the form "since + NP" (I.2.1) becomes superfluous)

2. before / after + NP (I.1.1)

   present / past / future V + NP (I.1.1)

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The Perfect forms in English are perhaps best considered as expressions of "anteriority + relevance", the Past Perfect indicating "anterior and relevant to a past moment", the Present Perfect "anterior and relevant to the present (or a future) moment.

4. Frequency

Expressions of frequency or repetition vary from the most general to the most particular. In English one of the meanings of the Present Tense is to indicate the repetitious or habitual nature of the event. All shades of distinction may be conveyed by the "frequency adverbs" (never ... sometimes ... often ... always) and more precision is obtained when specific time expressions are incorporated into frequency phrases.

e.g. ...on Mondays ... on some Mondays ... etc.

All verb forms will accept a frequentative interpretation. Frequency clauses may be introduced by "when(ever) ..." and catenative verb constructions may be continuative,

e.g. ... he kept asking ...

At the T-level the ability to make broad distinctions of frequency when supplemented by certain more specific expressions would seem to be adequate.

5. Sequence

Sequence is a notion which relates closely to the notion of posteriority. Sequence markers will by definition be characteristic of types of continuous writing or speech. As such they are relatively unimportant at the T-level.

6. Age

Although conventionally part of the content of early stages of language learning, expressions of age, oldness, newness, youth, etc. hardly seem of vital necessity to most learners.

1. Adverbs

never, sometimes, often, always

2. Verbs

Present Tense (habitual meaning)

3. Adverbials

on + NP (e.g. Mondays)

every + (day
(week
(Monday etc.

daily, weekly, monthly etc.

1. First, then, next, finally

./.

## II. Quantity

### 1. Grammatical number

In most languages grammatical number is a category which is obligatory and is closely associated with notional number.

1. singular/plural

(concord)

### 2. Numerals

Cardinals and ordinal numbers. The T-level does not require skilled command of the entire numeral system. It would seem best to familiarise the learner with the elements of the whole system while concentrating on those aspects which will serve him best in meeting communication needs

e.g. money, time, dimensions, etc.

1. cardinal numbers

1-100

+ indications about remainder of system

### 3. Quantifiers

(a) Most languages have the capacity to express generalised and indefinite quantification. In English a formal account of quantifiers must take into account the distinction between "divided" and "undivided" reference (countability and uncountability). These notions are usually realised by a class of pre-determiners - all, some, a few, a little ... etc. Universal quantification can also be realised by whoever, wherever, whenever, etc. The full system in English is very complex and again it would seem that a reduced system would suffice at the T-level.

1. all, a lot of, some, no (or not any, not a) + N count. or uncount.

(b) The essential distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect in Slavonic languages might be thought of as one of quantification, i.e. divided v. undivided reference. The usual analysis of aspect in English is not done in these terms, however, and the distinction is therefore not relevant to English.

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4. Operations

Arithmetical operations seem quite irrelevant to the T-level. However at more advanced stages and in specialised parts of the unit/credit system this may prove to be a very important category.

III. Space

1. Dimensions

The expression of dimensions can be an extremely important aspect of some specialised uses of language. The notion goes well beyond such things as linear dimensions and weight to include, for example, volume, gravity, elasticity, moisture, temperature, etc. at the T-level scarcely any of these are essential. Only distance seems likely to be a valuable dimension.

1. Distance

2. Location

Location is most characteristically expressed through the use of prepositions, often associated with case inflection of nouns. Distribution of prepositions varies a good deal from language to language and the prevalence of polysemy makes a notional approach difficult. Locational notions are often found in other word classes.

e.g. verbs - inhabit

1. in, at, on

(in front of, behind, near, opposite, under)

3. Motion

Languages often have different realisations for concepts involving location in space and those involving movement in space. At the same time there is often overlap between the two. Expressions of movement (as in directions) are at least as valuable at the T-level as expressions of location. Again prepositions are not the only significant word-class.

e.g. verbs - approach

1. to, from, in(to), on

(out of, across, past, down, up)

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IV. Matter

The question of how the learner wants to refer to the "physical" world is principally a matter of determining the semantic fields within which he will operate. At this point analysis in terms of situation and/or subject-matter will be more fruitful than a notional approach. No attempt is made, therefore, to define a referential vocabulary at either the threshold or the more advanced level.

The lexical content at the T-level will be specified in terms of nouns, verbs and adjectives. Relations between nouns and verbs will be handled largely through the category of case (see below). Relations between adjectives and nouns are dealt with here.

1. Adjective + noun
2. Noun + copula + adjective

V. Case

"Case notions comprise a set of universal, presumably innate, concepts which identify certain types of judgment human beings are capable of making about the events that are going on around them, judgments about such matters as who did it, who it happened to, and what got changed." (Fillmore)

1. Agentive

   i.e. the animate instigator of an action

   e.g. John drank the wine
   The wine was drunk by John
   It was John who drank the wine

1. Agent as Subject

   John arrived at nine o'clock
   John met me at the station
   John swims well etc.

2. Objective

   i.e. the entity acted upon by the verb

   e.g. John opened the door
   The door was opened by John
   It was the door that John opened

1. Objective as Object

   John opened the door

2. Objective as Subject

   The door is open

./.

3. Dative

i.e. the animate being affected by the verb

e.g. John believed that he would win
We persuaded John that he would win
It was apparent to John that he would win
John is sad
John was given a pay-rise

1. Dative as Indirect Object or Prepositional Phrase

Give John the ticket
or
Give the ticket to John

2. Dative as Subject

John is unwell

4. Instrumental

i.e. the inanimate means by which an action is carried out

e.g. The key opened the door
John used the key to open the door
John opened the door with the key

1. Instrumental as Prepositional Phrase

John ate the rice with a spoon

5. Locative

i.e. the location or spatial orientation of the event

e.g. Chicago is windy
It is windy in Chicago

1. Locative as Subject

Oxford is beautiful

2. Locative as a Prepositional Phrase

You'll find one in Oxford
Pay a visit to Oxford

(See also III 2 and 3 above)

6. Factitive

i.e. the object or being resulting from the action of the verb

e.g. Mary is knitting a sweater
The dinner is cooking

./.

7. Benefactive

i.e. the animate entity benefiting from the action

e.g. She received a present
He changed a pound for his wife

VI. Deixis

Categories of reference to the act of speech in which they occur

1. Person

Pronoun systems are widely divergent. They are essential for even the most rudimentary communication.

The T-level will certainly require subject and object pronouns and possessive adjectives. Other categories of person deixis are possessive pronouns, emphatic pronouns, reflexives and some aspects of verb inflection.

1. Subject pronouns
2. Object pronouns
3. Possessives

2. Time (see I above)

3. Place

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns indicate the relation in space of events, etc. to the place of speech. Again distinctions vary from language to language. They will be useful at the T-level, although not when presented as conventionally in teaching materials. "Here" and "there" are adverbial expressions of place deixis.

1. Demonstrative pronouns
2. Demonstrative adjectives
3. here/there

4. Anaphora

Virtually all deictic categories can be used for reference within the act of speech as well as reference outside it. For example, personal pronouns, demonstratives, time adverbials

1. Personal pronouns
2. Articles

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(e.g. "then") can all be used to avoid repetition of something specified earlier in the discourse. The English article system is probably to be considered as principally an anaphoric device. Articles and personal pronouns seem the most useful at the T-level.

## B. CATEGORIES OF COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION

There is a fundamental distinction, very important for language teaching, between what we do through language and what we report by means of language. For example, the person who says: "The manager ordered the drunk out of the restaurant" is reporting what took place (a command). The person who says: "Get out of here" or "Time you left" is issuing a command. The fact that we may know (in the case of a foreign language) how to report does not mean that we know how to do. In this case, "I order you out of this restaurant" is a possible but very unlikely way of issuing a command. Where a report might be expressed as "The manager threatened to call the police", the act of threatening itself could be "if you don't get out, I'll call the police" and not "I am threatening to call the police."

Language learning has concentrated much more on the use of language to report and describe than on doing things through language. This is because the learning of lexical labels (command, threat, warning, surprise ...) has been substituted for the learning of how the acts themselves are performed and because grammatical categories have too often been taken as categories of communication too. (Imperative = command, Interrogative = question, Comparative = comparison ...).

The thesis of this paper and indeed of the research of which it is a small part, is that what people want to do through language is more important than mastery of language as an unapplied system. While reporting and describing are acts that we would like to carry out through language, they are by no means the only ones that are important for the learner of a foreign language. In this section a categorisation is proposed for assigning utterances to particular functions. The categories are not restricted to acts of the kind that have been mentioned so far, nor do they limit themselves to what have come to be called "speech acts". They include some categories needed to handle cases where there is no one-to-one relation between grammatical category and communicative function and others involving expression of the speaker's intention and views.

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The framework adopted is largely ad hoc. To be entirely satisfying a multi-dimensional approach would have been necessary, since there are many components to the distinctions between the different functions. To have developed a theory to handle these distinctions would have been immensely time consuming and would have distracted me completely from the practical task in hand. I have only rarely therefore made explicit the extent to which the categories overlap one another or the fact that one set of functions might be placed equally well in more than one place in the system.

In the places where I have attempted to suggest some possible linguistic realisations of the communicative functions, the suggestions are made on the basis of introspection and not as the result of objective, observational research. In fact, research into the realisation of different communicative functions is a task that would occupy many linguists for many years. Rather than insist that practical applications of these ideas should await the results of long-term research, I have preferred a more speculative, subjective approach which can be of some immediate practical value.

There are some general linguistic points to be made before we look at the categories in detail:

(a) From what has already been said, it will be clear that it is not a matter simply of adding thousands of lexical items to the learner's store. A thesaurus shows thousands of words which relate to and label these functions. By no means all, and perhaps not even most of them are used in performing the functions. In the same way, there will be no single, unambiguous, grammatical structure by which a function is realised.

(b) Broadly, we are more concerned with what the speaker intends to achieve than with the effect he may inadvertently have. The effect of one speaker's utterances may be to bore his hearers, but it would be foolish and irrelevant to look for the linguistic means by which one succeeds in boring one's hearers.

(c) There is a class of verbs, the utterance of which seems to constitute the act itself:

I pronounce you man and wife
I promise to be here by twelve.

By no means all acts involve "performatives" of this sort and even where they are available, they are rarely the sole means of expression. Use of the relevant noun or a performative verb is often limited to more formal occasions.

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(d) It must not assumed that where the relevant noun or verb is used, the function of the utterance is automatically to be identified with it:

I question your motives
I state that I was not responsible for the accident (not "a question")
(emphatic assertion)

(e) The same word may be used in both reporting and performing a linguistic act:

He promised to come
I promise to come

We are here concerned with the latter, but since the syntactic features are the same in each case, it is clear that in these instances learning to make a promise is also learning to report a promise, and vice versa. In cases like this we might allow this pedagogic advantage to influence us in deciding which realisation of "promising" we would wish to teach.

(f) If a single grammatical category is used to express a variety of notions, we are likely to feel that those notions are closely associated with one another. For example, the subjunctive (or, in English, the modal system) is commonly used to express notions whose truth value is modified in some way.

(g) Few of the acts with which we are concerned have a unique means of linguistic expression. Some may contain a performative element. There will be some almost formulaic expressions in which simple substitution of lexical items is possible. In some cases particular grammatical categories will be closely associated with the communicative function. However, often, exact interpretation of an utterance will be impossible without knowledge of the situational and broader linguistic context. Intonation, too, plays a very important role in indicating the function of an utterance. Finally, there are occasions when no linguistic means at all are used to indicate what is being communicated, (as when we shake our heads to express "disagreement").

(h) It is possible that a learner who already has an advanced knowledge of the lexical and grammatical systems of a language can himself go a long way towards inferring the communicative functions of utterances to which the systems are applied. He may not need to be "taught" how to interpret utterances. This could only be the case where his knowledge was really very advanced and even so there would be many cases where grammatical and lexical knowledge was not enough.

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In the remaining part of this section the categories of communicative function are set out. In general each category or sub-category is glossed in broad terms. There then follows a list of vocabulary items falling within or closely related to the semantic field of the communicative function, some possibly themselves constituting functions, others used only in reporting. Where realisation of a function is needed at the T-level, an appropriate form is suggested on the right-hand side of the page. By way of exemplification, more detailed linguistic information on a number of categories is given below (p. 26).

VII. Modality

1. Certainty

i.e. degrees of objective certainty

Total certainty - certain, infallible, reliable

Probability - probable, plausible, likely, practicable

Possibility - possible, feasible, potential

Nil certainty - negation, impossible, impracticable

= absence of certainty
= certainty + negative

1. Positive and negative certainty are expressed through positive and negative declarative sentences which do not contain any modal modification.

2. Possibility and probability are probably not essential notions at the T-level.

2. Necessity

i.e. social necessity (closely related to certainty)

- inevitability, necessity

3. Conviction

i.e. personal conviction regarding the truth of a proposition, less than objective certainty or necessity

Strong positive - believe, be + convinced, be + positive, be + confident

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3.2 Intermediate - think, presume, suppose, infer, daresay, expect, judge, conclude, trust, be of the opinion, assume, hold, suspect, subscribe (to the view that), anticipate, foresee, predict, prophesy, consider, reckon, hope, surmise, guess, imagine, conjecture

3.3 Weak - doubt, be + sceptical

3.4 Negative - disbelieve, deny, (also 3.1 and 3.2 above + negative)

4. Volition

i.e. the speaker's intent with regard to a proposition

- will, volition, choice, inclination, intention, purpose, wish, desire, unwilling, design, mean, propose, contemplate, plan, project, want, prefer

1. Intention

I'm going to get a taxi
(I'll get a taxi)

2. Want

I'd like to see the museum
I want to see the museum

(Choice according to addressee and scale of politeness)

5. Obligation incurred

i.e. speaker's admission of an obligation in force as a result of either a present or a past event

- duty, liability, responsibility, allegiance, conscientiousness, obligation, onus, promise, undertake, assure, guarantee, contract

6. Obligation imposed

i.e. utterances intended to impose an obligation on someone else

- command, order, dictate, direct, compel, force, oblige, prohibit, forbid, disallow

./.

7. Tolerance

i.e. no hindrance offered to a proposal

- allow, tolerate, grant, consent, agree to, permit, authorise

1. Permission

Can I look at your paper? (may)

Yes
Of course (you can)

VIII. Moral discipline and evaluation

1. Judgment

1.1 Accepted - renounce, yield, resign, defer, confess

1.2 Favourable - vindicate, justify, advocate, defend

1.3 Valuation - estimate, value, assess, appreciate, judge, rank, place, grade (cf. VII 3)

- over-estimate, prejudge, misjudge

1.4 Delivered - condemn, convict, proscribe

- pronounce, rule, sentence, find, award

2. Release

i.e. release from blame or accusation

- exemption, release, acquit, discharge, let off, excuse, pardon, conciliation, reconciliation, forgive, exculpate, exonerate, absolve, reprieve, extenuate

1. Forgiveness

(a) Excuse me
Pardon me (for ...)

(b) That's alright
It doesn't matter

3. Approval

i.e. expression of approval of another's behaviour, performance, etc.

1. Praise

Good
Excellent
That's fine, etc.

./.

- approbation, approve, think well, appreciate, commend, praise, applaud, value, deserve, merit, entitle, give credit

4. Disapproval

i.e. expression of disapproval of another's behaviour, performance, etc.

- disapprobation, deprecate, blame, remonstrate, reprimand, accuse, denounce, condemn, frown upon, disparage, charge, impute, reproach, deplore, allege

IX. Suasion

i.e. utterances designed to influence the behaviour of others

1. Suasion

- persuade, suggest, advise, recommend, advocate, exhort, beg, urge, propose

2. Prediction

- warning, caution, menace, threat, (prediction), instruction, direction, invitation

2. Appreciation

Thank you for ...
I thoroughly enjoyed ...

1. Suggestion

Let's go to the zoo
We could go to the zoo

Shall we go to the zoo?

(I suggest { a visit to the zoo / that we go to the zoo })

1. Warning (comprehension only?)

Be careful!
Look out!
Mind { the puddle! / ..... }

(If you don't go, you may miss the last bus)

2. Direction (comprehension only?)

Take a 73 bus to Oxford Street and get off at Oxford Circus.
Or take a taxi.

./.

X. Argument

i.e. categories relating to the exchange of information and views

1. Information

1.1 Asserted (cf. modality, suasion, exposition)

tell, inform, report, proclaim, publish, assert, declare, state, emphasise, argue know, affirm, maintain, advocate, claim, contend, protest

1.2 Sought

- request, question, ask



You'll have to .....

Telephone instructions etc.

3. Invitation (comprehension only?)

Would you like to have a drink?

How about a drink?

Have a drink, won't you?
Won't you have a drink?

(Can I persuade you to have a drink?)

1. Stating (informing)

At this level information is transmitted to and from the learner by means of declarative sentences. The forms of these sentences at the T-level will be those that are required for the expression of the notions outlined (above and below

2. Question

Information seeking is likely to be an important aspect of a learner's language use.

(a) Interrogatives

(b) Declaratives + question intonation

(c) Question-word questions

When
Where
What
Who
How + (far / much / ?)

What (time)

./.

2. Agreement

i.e. agreeing with a statement or proposal made (cf. agree to)

- confirm, corroborate, endorse, support, assent, acquiesce, agree, concur, consent, ratify, approve

3. Disagreement

- dissent, demur, disagree, repudiate, contradict, dispute

4. Denial

- disproof, refutation, negation, confute, deny, disclaim, refuse, oppose, decline, reject, protest

5. Concession

i.e. argument ceded or case withdrawn

- concede, grant admit, (yield, defer, renounce), withdraw, abjure, abandon, retract, allow, confess, submit

3. Request

Would you shut the window, please.

(Would you mind shutting ...)

1. Agreement

I agree (with you)

That's right.
Of course. etc.

1. Disagreement

I disagree (with you / that)

(If you don't mind me saying so ....)

1. Negation

Grammatical negation

2. Declining (an invitation)

I'm afraid I can't come / accept / etc.

Unfortunately I can't ...

No, thank you.

1. Submission

(Alright, we'll follow your suggestion)

./.

XI. Rational enquiry and exposition

i.e. categories relating to the rational organisation of thought and speech. Clearly much of the content of argument and suasion will be taken up with utterances from these categories

1. No attempt has been made to sub-categorise. It is possible that each of the following represents a distinct sub-category.

   - implication, deduction, supposition, conjecture, assumption, proposition, hypothesis, substantiation, verification, proof, conclusion, demonstration, condition, consequence, result, inference, illation, corollary, presupposition, interpretation, explanation, definition, illustration, exemplification, concession, purpose, cause, classification, comparison, contrast

These categories are clearly of particular importance in certain highly specialised uses of language. However in varying degrees we also call upon most of them in our everyday use of language. There may be a place for some of them at least even at the T-level.

1. Cause

   We didn't go to the zoo, because it rained.

2. Condition (Simple only)

   If it rains we are going to visit the National Gallery.

3. Concession (or Contrast?)

   It's raining, but we are going to the zoo.

XII. Personal emotions

i.e. expression of personal reaction to events

1. Positive

   - pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, delight, contentment, peace of mind, wonder, marvel, astonishment, admiration, surprise, amazement, fascination

1. Pleasure

   It's a very good play, etc.

   I like the soup very much, etc.

2. Surprise

   This is a surprise

   Fancy seeing you here

(NB Intonation is important in both the above)

./.

2. Negative

- shock, displeasure, dissatisfaction, annoyance, irritation, care, anxiety, grief, sorrow, discontent, disappointment, bewilderment, anger, indignation, vexation, exasperation, resentment, lamentation, disdain, scorn, spite

1. Disappointment

It was a very disappointing play

It was very disappointing etc.

2. Annoyance

Often expressed through intonation and voice quality. Also by deliberate shifting from familiar and polite forms into formal and more direct language

XIII. Emotional relations

i.e. expression of response to events usually involving the interlocutor

1. Greeting

- welcome, greeting, salute, farewell

1. Common greetings and phatic formulae

2. Sympathy

- solicitude, regret, concern, condolence, sympathy, tolerance, consideration, compassion, commiseration, consolation

3. Gratitude

- thankfulness, gratefulness, acknowledgment, thanks

1. Thank you
(I wish to express my thanks etc. to ....) - needed in a more formal situation e.g. in writing

4. Flattery

- compliment, flattery, obeisance

./.

5. Hostility

- curse, execration, abuse, threat, damn, disdain, contempt, scorn, coolness, indifference

XIV. Interpersonal relations

A message must be encoded in a form which not only conveys the speaker's intention, but is also appropriate to the relationship which exists between him and his hearers. This relationship can be described as one of status and its most obvious markers indicate differing degrees of formality. The markers may be phonological, syntactic and lexical. Ultimately any learner will need to be able to express a range of relationships, but at the T-level a consistently neutral style, neither too formal, nor too intimate, will suffice.

1. Status

- frozen, formal consultative, casual, intimate (after Joos)

1. Consultative style

2. Politeness

- civility, politeness, coolness, rudeness, impoliteness

1. Polite rather than impolite forms of expression are likely to be needed at the T-level. For example even in situations where the learner has the authority to issue commands he is likely to cloak them as requests. For this reason, there is a T-level entry for requests but none for commands above.

./.

## PART 4. THE GRAMMATICAL CORE AND SITUATIONAL UNITS

Although the preceding section is couched in notional terms, notional, situational and grammatical considerations can never be entirely separated from one another. For example, what notions one expects a person to be able to express on completion of the T-level will depend on whether one expects him to use the language in everyday social intercourse at this stage. In suggesting the possible T-level content I have made the assumption that from the beginning the learner will be in a situation in which he needs to use the language and that the pedagogic presentation will reflect this. If, in fact, the T-level is rather to be a platform from which all practical uses will develop, there is no need to dress the grammatical content in an appearance of situational relevance.

Until now the issue has been prejudged, but given the general behavioural aims of the unit/credit system, we must now decide whether it is possible simultaneously to provide a firm grammatical basis for subsequent learning and to meet predictable situational needs. If we conceive of the most suitable situational needs being, rather conventionally, the kinds of interaction in which a visitor to a country is most likely to engage, we can conclude that, provided three conditions are accepted, it is perfectly feasible to do the two things at once.

The first proviso is that one must not expect the language in the learning units to be identical or even nearly identical with the language that would probably occur in the real situations. There are no simple language situations. The most simple situation may demand complex language. The deliberate limitation on linguistic content at the T-level, therefore, is bound to produce some degree of artificiality and unreality.

The second condition is that forms are presented not solely for their relevance to immediate context of presentation but because they are of general value throughout the language. The occurrence of a new form must therefore be generalised and related to the entire grammatical system of which it is a part. If a form is learned solely for its value in the single situation in which it is presented, the learner will be slow to develop creative use of language however fluent his command in that one situation.

The third point is that although the learner controls the language he produces outside the learning situation itself, he cannot control the language he hears. In this case provision may well have to be made for his early exposure to a much wider range of language than he will be required to produce. This is not an entirely novel proposal and some language courses already provide for this.

./.

The question inevitably arises of how the learning of the common core might be organised at the more advanced as well as at the T-level. A possible solution may lie in the adoption of a cyclic approach. At the lowest (T-) level a situation containing strictly limited language is introduced. This permits rudimentary communication of the essential features of the situation. The novel language is exploited, practised and generalised. The learner has acquired the ability to communicate at least the essential notions in a situation he is likely to meet. At a second level the situation is re-introduced with a wider range of language forms more closely reflecting the essential characteristics of the native speaker's language performance in this situation. The learner will have acquired greater confidence and wider variety in his means of expression. At the third and later levels the situation will recur now perhaps with not only high probability language forms but with forms appropriate to some of the non-situational categories of use. Within the same situational context, the learner might learn to express anger, doubt, emphasis, suggestion, disagreement and so on.

## PART 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Not all language needs can be accounted for by a prediction of the possible language situations in which a person will engage. This paper proposes a way of resolving, within a single framework, the problems of determining, first, what is grammatically necessary as a sound basis of all language use and, secondly, what constitutes a speaker's communicative competence. The framework is organised in notional categories. By considering first what the content of utterances is likely to be, it is possible to decide which forms of language will be most valuable. If it is assumed that most learners will need to express a similar range of content, it becomes possible to set up comparable syllabuses for different languages. The notional information will need to be supplemented by information on grammatical categories in particular languages which are obligatory but possibly not predictable from the notional approach (e.g. gender). Some situational information will be useful too, if, as is argued, the grammatical common core can be adapted to a situational mode of presentation. In this case, it is suggested, a cyclic approach to the teaching of the common core might prove fruitful. Indications are given of notions needed at the threshold level and their formal realisations. A number of detailed examples are given of the varied ways in which some of the functional categories are expressed in English.

./.

# A P P E N D I X  A

## Exemplification of categories of communicative function

In the course of preparing this paper a large number of functional categories have been examined. Lack of space means that it is possible to exemplify only a few of these here. It should perhaps be repeated that the data given below are the product of introspection, not observational research. In each case the exemplification takes the following form:

1. Definition - especially in relation to adjacent functions.
2. Performative expressions (see p. 13).
3. Grammatical expressions - capable of generating many sentences/utterances having the same communication function.
4. Idiomatic and near-idiomatic expressions - susceptible of little or no further generalisation.
5. Implied functions - utterances which do not express the given function, but (strongly) imply it.

(a) Suggestion

1. Proposes a possible course of action. Differs from advice in that it does not carry the speaker's recommendation and has no implication of benefit for the hearer.

2. I suggest (a visit to the zoo / that (we / you) go to the zoo)

3. (Shall we / Let's / Why don't we / You (could / might)) go to the zoo

4. (How about / What about / Have you thought of) (us / our) going to the zoo

./.

Appendix A

Suppose / Supposing) we (went / go) to the zoo

An alternative / Another possibility) would be to go to the zoo

4. -

5. I wonder (if / whether) the zoo is open

Perhaps the zoo is open

Would you consider going to the zoo

(Has anyone got a suggestion?) Well, there's the zoo

(b) Advice

1. Proposes a course of action with the speaker's recommendation that it will be in the hearer's interest to follow it.

2. I advise / recommend) you to take the job
that you take the job
acceptance of the job

I suggest strongly that you take the job

3. It would be best / It seems advisable / The best course seems to be) (for you) to take the job

If you take my advice, you'll take the job

(If I may give you some advice) / (If I were you) ) I would take the job / I would seriously consider taking the job

./.

I think you should) take the job
You'd better )

On no account ) take that job
Under no circumstances)

Don't take that job, (under any circumstances
(on any account

4. -

5. Why don't you take the job

Do you think it is advisable? (i.e. strong implication that it is not advisable)

(c) Moral obligation - incurred

1. The speaker acknowledges that he is under some obligation to another person or to society to act in a certain way.

2. -

3. must )
have to )
I am bound to ) help him
am obliged to)
(ought to) )
(should) )

It is my duty )
I am in duty bound) to help him
The onus is on me )

I owe it to him (to help him)

I (feel) under (some) obligation to help him
( am ) ( an )

It's obligatory

It's my responsibility to .....

./.

I'm responsible / I'm answerable } for this

I have to answer for this

I am indebted to (you / him)

4. I am saddled with the job of helping him

I can't get out of it

5. I have no choice

I've said I'll do it

I promised to help him

I'm committed

He did it on condition that I bought it (i.e. therefore I must buy it)

It is only right that I should help him

It rests with me to help him

(d) Disagreement

1. -

2. I disagree with (your argument / you

I tend to / totally / rather / would } disagree .....

3. I can't accept your argument

I can't agree with you

./.

I can't / don't share your views

I couldn't agree less

4. That's nonsense / rubbish

I beg to differ

5. If you don't mind me saying so, you're ignoring certain factors

I see things rather differently

I remain / am unconvinced that what you say is true / of the truth of what you say

That's out of the question

I don't think that's right

(e) Requests

1. Making a request means asking for something or for something to be done. It presupposes that the speaker wants the activity carried out, however the speaker has no authority over the addressee and therefore cannot give a command that it should be done. Requests and commands are not always formally distinguished from one another, since what appears to be a request may in fact have all the strength of a command if the speaker has or believes he has, the necessary authority over the hearer. Intonation has an important role in marking requests.

2. I request you to leave the country (Such an utterance would be restricted to very formal circumstances and is probably not a request at all but a command)

3. Would you mind / Do you mind shutting the window

Would you like to shut the window

./.

(Could / Would / Will / Can) you ... open the window

(Would / Will) you be (so good as / so kind as / good enough / kind enough) to ... open the window

Shut the window, (will you / would you / please)

4. (May / Can) I trouble you for a light

Have you got a light

5. I wish you'd be quiet

If you shut the window, we'll soon get warm

You might shut the window

Perhaps you'd like to shut the window

I hoped you'd lend me a pound

NB It is interesting to note the occurrence of past tense forms in many of the above utterances, e.g. would, could, might, hoped

(f) Authorisation

1. Authorising is closely related to functions like permitting, consenting, approving, allowing, agreeing to, and tolerating. It is a function which is apparently exercised in a more formal and legalistic manner. It also reinforces the support given to the person receiving the authority. Only the performative use of the various verbs is illustrated here, as it brings out a significant syntactic point.

./.

2. I (hereby) authorise { his visit to the prison i.
him to visit the prison ii.
that he should visit the prison iii.
his visiting the prison iv.

Other verbs of similar meaning could be used in place of "authorise" in sentences like these whether as performatives or in reporting such events. They cannot all, however, be followed by the same complement structures:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| allow | | i. | ii. | iii. | |
| consent to | | i. | | | iv. |
| agree to | | i. | | | iv. |
| permit | + | i. | ii. | | iv. |
| approve | | i. | | iii. | iv. |
| tolerate | | i. | | | iv. |

This illustrates the problems that face the learner of English in mastering the use of complement structures. The wider study of communicative functions in English has shown how much advanced use of English is dependent on the ability to handle this aspect of English grammar.